

Summary of Housing Transition Planning and Preparation with MFP

Participants:

Adapted from Choose, Get, Keep Integrated Community Housing

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Finding and talking to individuals who want to move – *outreach and engagement; assessment; finding housing; and tenant preparation* are all activities that occur before the MFP participant ever leaves a nursing home or other institutional setting. Planning and preparation are essential to making a successful move.

The individual needs to develop a realistic understanding of what it will take to make it happen while maintaining hopeful expectations of the move. The transition coordinator needs to support the hopes and dreams of the person, and bring expert skills and knowledge to the efforts.

Transition Coordinator Approach	Less Helpful Approach
Person-focused	Problem-focused
Reinforces self-determination	"We know what is best"
Respect	Disrespect
Hope	Discouragement
Careful Listening	Giving answers and solutions

Outreach and Engagement

Refer to referral in transition process.

Assessment—Key to Good Planning

At the beginning of the process, the individual's assessment of their needs and wants may be more about why they want to move, and only a little bit about resources and services that might be needed to make it happen. The transition coordinator and the MFP participant will need to get to know one another. This includes learning about the person and their motivation for moving. The transition coordinator also needs to start the process of assessing, in a practical way, what it will take to move.

Assessment can be done through conversation, using a questionnaire, or a combination of both. It is important to set sufficient time aside to ask each potential participant open-ended questions that will begin to identify their housing and support service preferences. Talk about and explore the individual's thoughts and dreams about the kind of place in which they would like to live. This begins the process of creating some specific detail about the housing desired.

Have the conversation over a series of informal meetings. It might be intimidating for the person to feel that they have to answer all these questions at once. Understand that hearing the question might be the first time the person has considered the issue. Asking again another time, after the person has had a chance to really think about it, might result in more valid answers.

Possible questions to use in assessment:

- Why do you want to move?
- What resources do you have to help you move?
- How much do you think you could afford to pay each month for rent and utilities?
- Do you have some personal financial resources such as income from a job, Veteran's benefits or disability payments?
- Do you have a guardian or payee who manages your money? (if yes, contact with this person is essential).
- Do you think you need help in money management such as making sure the rent and utilities are paid and that you have money for emergencies? Do you know of community services or resources that could help you with this?
- Are you eligible for housing subsidies and assistance, waiver services? (The transition coordinator brings to this discussion a complete background in what it takes to BE eligible for these benefits.)
- Do you want help in finding, getting, and/or keeping a living situation?
- Do you have friends or family who could/would help?
- What extra help do you think would be useful to you?
- Living Arrangements: Do you want a house, apartment, condominium? Do you like neighbors to be close or do you value privacy more? How do you feel about shared living? If you chose shared living, would you want a private bedroom? Access to the kitchen? A private bathroom? (Consider MFP requirements for housing).
- Living with others: Would you share a living space (apartment, house)? Would you like a housemate? If yes, are you hoping that they will be a tenant, a friend, backup in case of emergency? Would you like a housemate that is also a romantic partner? Do you have family members you would like to live with?
- Housing features: Do you want to have air conditioning, an inside laundry room, first-floor unit, do you mind climbing stairs, will you have a car that you need to park? Do you want or need modifications to the housing? What are they?
- Safety and visitors: Would you like to live in a gated community? Would you like your friends to come and go as they please?

- Neighborhood: Do you have a specific neighborhood in mind? What kind of neighborhood sounds good – lots of trees, near shopping, public transportation? Do you want to be near specific places like family members, church, doctors' offices?
- Personal support needs: Do you need/want personal assistance services? If yes, how much, for what purpose, when? Will you hire your own workers? Do you need help cleaning, cooking, managing money? Do you use or need to get personal adaptive equipment?
- Animals: Do you have or want to get a pet? What kind? Do you have or will you want a service animal?
- Alcohol and other drugs: Do you want to live in a community that supports sobriety? Do you want freedom to do as you please on this issue? How do you feel about being in a setting where some people may be using drugs and alcohol?
- Activities: What kinds of social events do you like? Do you keep your own company or are you a social person? Do you like sponsored activities (movies, for example) or would you just like to go alone or with a friend?

**Possible questionnaires include the following tools:

“What Do I Want in a New Place?”

“Accessibility Considerations Checklist”

“Pros and Cons of Housemates”

Finding Housing

A transition coordinator must be familiar with a wide variety of sources for housing to help the person create a realistic plan for moving. This includes working with landlords and public housing authorities; educating about options; prioritizing wants and needs; preparing the tenant to move; and overcoming any barriers.

This step will include developing a **written plan**. The written plan is created by the transition coordinator and MFP participant together. Others who may have input into the plan include people working on the support team, family members (when appropriate), and other members of the participant's team. The plan is focused on choosing, getting, and keeping housing in the community. While it can and should include a plan for accessing needed support services, this plan is about housing. The plan should be very specific and should always include clear statements about who will do what, by when. It should include:

- Actions that the person will take on his or her own behalf;
- Actions the housing specialist will take;
- Additional supports that the program will provide; and

- Details about the services and supports that will be pulled together from various sources to help the person succeed.

In addition, the plan should include some way to evaluate whether or not the goals have been met. In other words, it should specify milestones or short-term goals to be reached, and it should describe in clear terms what successful outcomes will look like.

Included in the written plan are the spending plan, support plan, and timeline.

The **spending plan** is a concrete way to talk about income, “have-to” expenses and “want-to” expenses. This tool can identify areas where the transition coordinator can start looking for additional resources. For example, in completing this form, it might become apparent that rental assistance would make the difference in terms of having enough money to move and live in the community. The transition coordinator identifies gaps in the budget and works with the individual to develop a plan for making the budget work.

****Tools:**

“What Will It Cost To Move In?”

Preliminary **planning for supports and services** begins with a detailed discussion of the kinds of supports and services the individual receives now. Once the transition coordinator has a complete picture of the current situation, it is helpful to ask – what is missing from your current supports and services? It is also helpful to know if there are things in the current plan that the individual can do without. For example, the institutional setting offers 24 hour staff support. It might be possible for the person to use fewer hours (say, 12 hours) or more intensive supports provided at specific times.

In addition to the supports and services an individual needs to get along outside the institution, the transition coordinator may help the person think about a comprehensive array of services focused on real life in the community. These could include:

General Supportive Services:

- Help in moving and getting settled
- Help in setting goals and developing plans
- Help in meeting obligations of tenancy and avoiding eviction
- Intervention in cases of domestic violence and securing a safe environment
- Training in assertiveness and how to get involved in tenant issues
- Linking to activities in the community, including worship services and recreational activities

Vocational Services:

- Exploring job skills, possibly help in finding a job
- Arranging education and training, such as computer classes
- Support and coaching

Practical Issues:

- Help in making sure the rent is paid on time
- Preventing and resolving conflicts
- Training in independent living skills such as shopping, laundry and cooking, if needed
- Coaching regarding safety issues
- Help in facilitating access to public transportation
- Help in applying for and maintaining benefits

Health/Behavioral Health Services:

- Help in arranging routine visits with physicians and dentists
- Receiving nutritional counseling
- Linking to community-based mental health services
- Education about mental illnesses, medications, and treatments
- Help in developing a system for taking medication and reporting any side effects
- Getting referrals to treatment programs
- Help in finding drug- and alcohol-free recreational activities
- Linking with peers who can provide support or self-help groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)

Once you have the information from the spending plan and the support plan, it is important to work with the person to **develop a timeline**. A written timeline, with lists of what needs to be done by the person and the housing specialist, does two things. First, it provides a map of what needs to happen. And, it provides the person with a real reason to hope – it allows all involved to keep track of what has been done and to celebrate progress towards moving day.

****Tools:**

“Planning Ahead: What to Think About and Do in the MONTHS Before You Move”

“Planning Ahead: What to Think About and Do in the WEEKS Before You Move”

“Planning Ahead: What to Think About and Do in the DAYS Before You Move”

Tenant Preparation

Often, people who have been living in nursing homes and other institutions may need help in learning or re-learning how to be a good tenant. Tenant preparation includes giving tenants current information about costs, teaching

people about leases, and talking to people about how to approach landlords and neighbors.

A transition coordinator needs to prepare MFP participants to make successful contacts with landlords or property management companies because they will be meeting landlords/managers when they visit the units. To increase the likelihood of a successful outcome, the transition coordinator might coach a participant about how to approach a landlord. This can include role play with the person and help him or her practice asking and answering routine questions such as "How much is the rent? How big is the unit? How many people live in this apartment complex? Do you allow pets?" As people practice interviewing to secure housing, they will gain skills and self-confidence. Role playing can help people do well in an interview with potential landlords.

Another area of preparation is helping prospective tenants understand the lease. A standard lease typically describes the responsibilities of the tenant and the landlord. Basically, tenants must pay rent, keep the unit reasonably clean, may not damage the property, and may not interfere with their neighbor's right to use and enjoy their units. Landlords must provide a safe environment, ensure that utilities work, and enter the property only for specific reasons and only after reasonable notice is given.

****Tools:**

- "Monthly Personal Spending Plan"
- "Getting Along With Your Landlord: How to Be a Good Tenant"
- "Getting Along With Others: How to Be a Good Neighbor"
- "What is Ordinary Wear and Tear?"
- "Example Move-In/Move-Out Check List"

MFP Grant Requirements:

Transition teams will use this housing checklist to verify that each MFP participant is moving into an MFP qualified residence.

- **Tool:** Housing Checklist